Metheringham Primary School Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

At Metheringham Primary School, we are aware that pupils may be bullied in any school or setting, and recognise that preventing, raising awareness and consistently responding to any cases of bullying should be a priority to ensure the safety and well-being of our pupils.

In line with the *Equality Act 2010* it is essential that our school:

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

At Metheringham Primary School, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Under the *Children Act 1989* a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a pupil is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to their local authority children's services department.

This policy is closely linked with our Behaviour Policy, our Safeguarding Policy, our school Code of Conduct and the school's Vision, Aims and Values.

Principles

It is the responsibility of the governing body and the Headteacher to ensure that all members of the school community work within a safe and enabling environment.

We value pupils developing 'respect for others resulting from active listening, trust and honesty' (*Vision, Aims and Values*).

The four guiding principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage underpin our Anti-Bullying Policy from the moment a pupil enters our school, and throughout their time at Metheringham Primary School. They are:

- every pupil is a *unique pupil,* who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- pupils learn to be strong and independent through *positive relationships*;
- pupils learn and develop well in *enabling environments*, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- *pupils develop and learn in different ways and at different rates* including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities

Aims

We are determined to promote and develop a school ethos where bullying behaviour is regarded as unacceptable, to ensure a safe and secure environment is sustained for all pupils.

We aim for all pupils to reach their potential academically, socially and personally through learning and playing in a safe and secure environment.

Bullying Definition

At Metheringham Primary School, we discuss what bullying is, as well as incidents we would not describe as bullying, with all pupils through assemblies and PSHE lessons.

When we talk about incidents between pupils at school, we use the language:
- rude
- mean
- bullying

It's important that we have a shared language and approach to incidents between peers in school and at home.
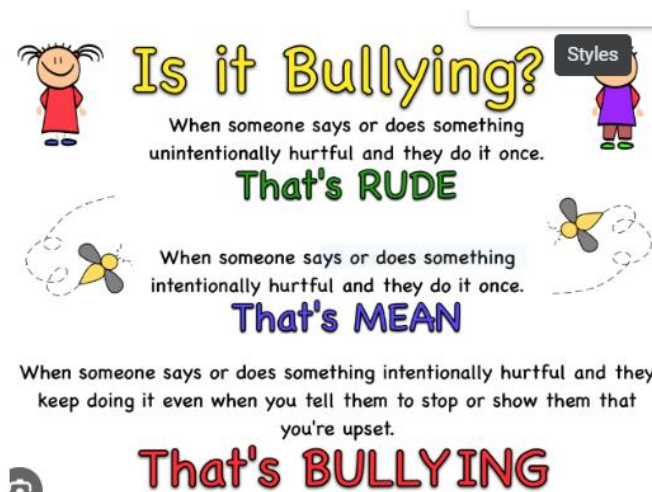
We agree that:

- Bullying is usually physical hurting, name calling, nasty looks or leaving people out.
- Bullying usually happens when the relationship is imbalanced.
- Bullying is usually on-going.

What does bullying behaviour look like?

At Metheringham Primary School we consider the context within which incidents and/or behaviours of concern occur. We will consider the motivations behind the behaviours and will consider the age and stage of development of the pupils involved. Our focus will always be the safety and welfare of all children involved.

Bullying behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

• Physical – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.

• Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling

• Emotional – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books/belongings, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation, and coercion

• Sexual – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.

• Online / Cyber – posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion etc.

• Indirect – can include the exploitation of individuals such as 'false friendships', criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, and radicalisation

 • Prejudice-related – derogatory and discriminatory language and behaviour including that which is racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and disablist in nature. This language and behaviour may be directed towards people because of their race/ethnicity/nationality; because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans, or are perceived to be, or have a parent/carer, sibling, or friend who is, because they have a learning or physical disability. Such language and behaviour are generally used to refer to something or someone as inferior.

There is no hierarchy of bullying, all forms of bullying are taken equally seriously and will be dealt with appropriately.

Our school understands that banter is an increasingly relevant part of discussions relating to bullying; however, it is important to acknowledge that banter is not inherently bullying, and it can be an important part of social bonding and friendships.

 At the same time, we know that some bullying in society is passed off as 'just banter', and we know that banter can quickly escalate to inappropriate or harmful exchanges and bullying. Our school defines 'prosocial banter' as 'playful, typically funny, teasing between friends'. Prosocial banter can occur both online and offline and includes a range of behaviours that may be verbal, physical, or information/message sharing (online). Banter can include some of bullying behaviours set out in this policy document, so it is important to distinguish between shared positive social bonding and inappropriate banter and bullying. School staff will distinguish between banter and bullying by taking careful consideration of the intention, content and topic of reported incidents.

Vulnerable Groups

We recognise that some groups of pupils may be more vulnerable to bullying, including:

- Looked After Children
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
- Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)
- Children from ethnic minorities
- Children entitled to Free School Meals
- Children for whom English is an Additional Language
- Children who are perceived to be gay, lesbian or bisexual

Signs of Bullying

Staff should be vigilant in looking out for signs of bullying or other child protection issues including:

Physical: unexplained bruised, scratches, cuts, missing belongings, damaged clothes, or schoolwork, loss of appetite, stomach aches, headaches, bedwetting.

Emotional: losing interest in school, withdrawn, secretive, unusual shows of temper, refusal to say why unhappy, high level of anxiety, mood swings, tearfulness for no reason, lack of confidence, headaches and stomach aches, signs of depression.

Behavioural: asking to be taken to school, coming home for lunch, taking longer to get home, asks for more money, using different routes to school, 'losing' more items than usual, sudden changes in behaviour and mood, concentration difficulties, truancy.

Bullying Prevention

Preventing and raising awareness of bullying is an essential to keeping incidents in our school to a minimum. Through assemblies as well as PSHE lessons, pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss what bullying is, as well as incidents we would not describe as bullying, such as two friends falling out, or a one-off argument. An annual Anti-bullying Week is held to further raise awareness. Online safety is an important part of the curriculum and information for parents is distributed in hand outs and on the school website. Annual online safety training is delivered by and external consultant to pupils and staff. This supports the online safety training delivered as part of our curriculum provision.

Pupils are taught to tell an adult in school if they are concerned that someone is being bullied. We have agreed the following actions if someone feels uncomfortable about any action or words said in school;

- Hand up in the stop position
- The use of the saying "Stop, I don't like it!"

If a member of staff observes or hears this, they should remain vigilant to make sure that the rule is followed. If a pupil feels that their request to stop has been ignored, then they must walk away and tell an adult.

The schools recording system, CPOMS should be used to report any incidents no matter how small. This will help to build a picture over time and give vital information when looking at the whole child.

Code of Conduct

Our Behaviour Policy includes rewards and sanctions which are used consistently, alongside positive relationships, to prevent inappropriate behaviour, and promote positive behaviour.

Our school Code of Conduct is underpinned by our school rules of Ready, Respectful and Safe and is clearly outlined in our Behaviour Blueprint (see Behaviour Policy). This is regularly promoted in assemblies and displayed throughout the school. Through pupils following these rules, and staff reinforcing them, bullying should be significantly reduced. Our Code of Conduct promotes that all should:

- · Be kind, helpful and polite to others
- · Be respectful of others; their opinions, feelings and property
- · Respect everyone's right to speak and to be heard
- · Work quietly to avoid disturbing others
- · Care for the school environment and those in it by being tidy, clean and organised
- · Use materials and equipment wisely and safely
- · Move around the school and grounds safely and sensibly

Responding to Bullying

All cases of alleged bullying should be reported to the Class Teacher in the first instance. They will then report concerns to the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher or senior member of staff.

In any case of alleged bullying, either the Class teacher, Headteacher, or a senior member of staff should first establish the facts, and build an accurate picture of events over time, through speaking to the alleged perpetrator(s), victim(s) and adult witnesses, as well as parents and pupil witnesses if necessary and appropriate.

If the allegation of bullying is upheld, the Headteacher (or senior leader) should seek to use a restorative approach with the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) together. The perpetrator(s) should fully understand the consequences of their actions on the victim(s) and apologise without reservation. Both parties should be clear that a repeat of these behaviours will not be acceptable.

If the allegation of bullying is not upheld, the school would offer to provide social and emotional support to both pupils and families to address any findings and considerations from the investigations.

All bullying incidents must be recorded. These incidents must be recorded on CPOMS. Parents of both parties should be informed.

If the situation does not improve, the Headteacher (or senior leader) should meet with the parent(s) of the bullying child(ren) and agree clear expectations and boundaries which would be shared with the pupils involved. Any further incidents should lead to intervention (e.g. through outside agencies), further monitoring, support and punitive sanctions as deemed necessary. Any necessary action should be taken until the bullying has stopped.

Parents and Carers:

We understand that it can be very difficult for a parent/carer to be concerned or hear that their child has been the target of bullying, has experienced bullying behaviour or is an alleged perpetrator of bullying.

We ask that if parents/carers have concerns about their child experiencing or perpetrating bullying, that they contact a member of school staff. Initially we ask parents/carers to contact their child's class teacher to explain their concerns. The class teacher will take an initial note of the concerns but may ask to schedule a meeting to allow for more time to discuss the concerns in detail.

Following the report and/or the meeting, the teacher will make a formal record of the bullying report on the school's recording system (CPOMs) and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

The Headteacher or SLT may become involved at any point in the process if deemed appropriate.

We ask that parents/carers to come directly to the school with their concerns rather than discussing them with other members of the school community in person or online. Our school remains committed to supporting pupils and their families in all instances of bullying and relational conflict and will respond to reports promptly. Even if the behaviour/incident which has been reported is deemed 'not bullying' and is thought to be 'relational conflict', school staff will still support the pupils involved and help them to resolve any concerns.

We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations). This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates

Breaches / Complaints

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with in the same way that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Headteacher and Governing Body. If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school's actions, we ask that they follow our school's complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website, and on request from the school office.

This policy will be reviewed in January 2025 or earlier if required.